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# Florida Moves Toward Banning H-1B Visa Hires

University system leaders say they need to pause hiring on the visas for a year to collect information about how universities utilize the program. Only the student and faculty board representatives objected.

By [Ryan Quinn](#)



The Florida Board of Governors is on the cusp of banning new H-1B hires at public universities. The University of Florida was approved for 253 H-1B visas in fiscal year 2025.

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**F**lorida took another step Thursday toward banning all its public universities from hiring foreign workers on H-1B visas.

The state university system's Board of Governors will now take public comments for two weeks on a proposed prohibition on hiring any new employees on H-1Bs through Jan. 5 of next year. The vote from a committee to further the proposal was a voice vote, with no nays heard from any committee member. The proposal will come back to the full board for a vote after the public comment period ends.

If enacted, Florida would become the second state to ban the use of H-1B visas at public universities. Texas governor Greg Abbott announced a one-year freeze earlier this week—a move that prompted pushback from faculty.

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The state bans come after President Trump placed a \$100,000 fee on new H-1B visa applications in September (international workers who are already legal residents aren't required to pay the fee). The next month, Florida governor Ron DeSantis ordered the state's universities to "pull the plug on the use of these H-1B visas." Fourteen of the Board of Governors' 17 members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate.

DeSantis complained about professors coming from China, "supposed Palestine" and elsewhere. He added that "we need to make sure our citizens here in Florida are first in line for job opportunities."

Universities use the program to hire faculty, doctors and researchers and argue it's required to meet needs in health care, engineering and other specialized occupations. Some conservatives contend that the program is being abused.

Discussion about the proposed ban lasted about 15 minutes Thursday, during which no committee member strongly advocated for the policy. Much of the time consisted of the board's only faculty voting member and its only student voting member—neither of whom are members of the committee—reading off their objections to the move. Among their concerns: university system leaders' plans to collect information on the H-1B program during the hiring moratorium, instead of collecting the data before making a decision.

Kimberly Dunn, chair of the statewide Advisory Council of Faculty Senates and the faculty board representative, said institutions and the university system “rely on the H-1B process to recruit world-class talent to our institutions.”

“Whether it is a pediatric cancer surgeon or a globally recognized researcher, these individuals directly contribute to Floridians’ health, safety and economic success,” Dunn said. “In many cases, the H-1B visa is the only viable pathway for bringing this level of expertise to our state.”

“Limiting our ability to recruit the very best talent in the world risks undermining the excellence that has positioned our system as a national leader,” Dunn added. She said the reputational damage from the ban could outlast the yearlong moratorium.

She urged the system to collect the data before pausing hiring new H-1B visa workers.

Carson Dale, Florida State University’s student body president and chair of the Florida Student Association, said he believes that “American taxpayer dollars should support hiring Americans whenever possible.”

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“Where I part ways is with the mechanism chosen here,” Dale said. “This is not a neutral reform; it is a categorical restriction that determines who we are allowed to consider regardless of who is most qualified.”

He said the prohibition undermines Florida universities’ commitment to “merit” and goes against other actions that Florida has taken, including scaling back diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives because “we believed they risked interfering with merit-based selection.”

“This regulation has the practical effect of excluding otherwise highly qualified candidates before individual merit can be assessed,” Dale said. “That matters because the labor market for advanced research talent is global.”

He said Trump’s \$100,000 fee was already implemented “to deter overuse and protect U.S. workers.” He noted Elon Musk, along with other entrepreneurs, came to the U.S. from overseas.

“Top-tier candidates are not going to pause their careers to wait on a single state,” Dale said. “When Florida removes itself from consideration for an entire hiring cycle, those candidates accept offers elsewhere.”

Last fiscal year, according to a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services database, the federal government approved 253 H-1B visa holders to work at the University of Florida, about 110 each at Florida State University and the University of South Florida, 47 at the University of Central Florida, and smaller numbers at other public institutions.

Ray Rodrigues, the university system’s chancellor, told the committee that if the H-1B hiring pause is approved, his office and the universities “will be studying the cost of the H-1B program as well as how the program is used by our universities, including identifying the areas where the program is currently being used and whether those areas are of strategic need.”

He also said the study will look at whether employers have used the program to bring in employees who are “paid less than market wage.” He added that the system plans to work with universities to identify other areas that should be included in the study.

Alan Levine, chair of the Nomination and Governance Committee, which considered the proposal, appeared to acknowledge the issues that a blunt yearlong ban on H-1B hires could cause.

“I would encourage the universities—if an issue arises that’s unforeseen, particularly in areas like medical schools, faculty, engineering, where we have contracts with the Defense Department, things like that—where there’s issues that become an issue of concern for you, please bring those to the chancellor so that we can make a decision about how to address it,” Levine said. “We can always bring the group back together again if we need to.”

“Certainly there are physician shortages, and there’s needs particularly in high-acuity specialties in health care and medicine, and certainly there’s issues in certain STEM areas like engineering, so it’s understood,” Levine said. “The goal here is to collect information.”

## **Written By**

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